



Connecticut Department of
**ENERGY &
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION**

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Public Hearing – March 7, 2014
Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Interim Commissioner Robert J. Klee
Presented By Deputy Commissioner Susan Whalen

Raised House Bill No. 5423 – AAC THE SPEED OF VESSELS ALONG CERTAIN PORTIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding Raised House Bill No. 5423 – AAC THE SPEED OF VESSELS ALONG CERTAIN PORTIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has serious concerns about the proposal and welcomes the opportunity to offer the following testimony.

DEEP opposes this bill as it would effectively undermine the intent of the Hartford area speed zone, cause confusion among boaters, and endanger other persons using the same area of the river. Under this proposal, powerboats under 22 feet on this stretch of the Connecticut River would be allowed to travel at a speed twenty or thirty miles per hour when passing within seventy five feet of wharfs, piers, or docks in and around the city of Hartford. This is counter to the current statewide six miles per hour regulation that exists when in close proximity to shore or infrastructure and is applicable on lakes, rivers and coastal waters. Similar or more restrictive laws apply nationally as a means of ensuring safe conduct on these near shore waters for all users.

Varying speed zones for different size boats would be extremely confusing to boaters, and very difficult for law enforcement personnel to enforce. The six miles per hour restriction for all vessels operating within 100 feet of shore (200 ft for personal watercraft) is a limit which is absolutely necessary to protect the lives of boaters and others who use the Connecticut River for recreation and commerce.

Allowing certain vessels to speed up near-shore and specifically in front of wharves, piers or docks will create wakes that threaten to capsize small vessels, make marine fueling operations perilous, and reduce the available reaction time necessary to recognize and avoid structures such as bridge piers, pilings, and sandbars. It will also make it more difficult for the vessel operator to recognize and avoid common floating and submerged near-shore obstacles such as snags and debris, mooring tackle, swimmers, rafters, and low-lying vessels, such as paddle craft and rowers, which typically occupy this near shore area. This activity will also cause damage to anchored, moored and docked vessels and real property. Finally, it will exacerbate noise issues from power boats, which DEEP and the General Assembly have worked so hard to resolve on this river.

For the reasons noted above we request that the Environment Committee NOT favorably report this bill, Raised House Bill No. 5423 – AAC THE SPEED OF VESSELS ALONG CERTAIN PORTIONS OF THE CONNECTICUT RIVER.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. If you should require any additional information, please contact Robert LaFrance, DEEP's Director of Governmental Affairs, at 860.424.3401 or Robert.LaFrance@ct.gov (or, Elizabeth McAuliffe, DEEP Legislative Liaison, at 860.424.3458 or Elizabeth.McAuliffe@ct.gov).